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III

Sexual Relations and Marriage

EVEN KAINGÁNG BABIES LEARN that the terms connected with sex have an aura of laughter and spice. *Waikó*, to copulate; *waindjã*, to have an affair; *mbdde*, lover or husband; *plų*, wife or sweetheart; *ãnglãnglé*, my co-spouse, are some of the terms which, brought into a conversation, occasion any amount of smirking, tittering and laughing. The sexuality of little boys is stimulated by their mothers by manipulation of the genitals before they can walk. Although little children of two and three are told jocularly to copulate with one another, their attention is directed toward adults. A boy of three has already learnt to say, in answer to the question, "With whom do you copulate," "With Waikome," who may be his grandfather's sister. Babies are jokingly told to copulate with people anywhere from ten to twenty times their age, and a man sixty-five years old will call a toddler of three "my co-husband." Children of all ages are pressed into service to remove ticks, and it is not at all uncommon to see a little girl of five or six hovering over a supine man picking the ticks off his genitals.

A child soon learns to repeat the jokes that go around the campfire and to shout gleefully, "You copulate with your first cousin!" A boy of nine is jokingly taunted with masturbation, told that he has deflowered his fifteen-year-old cousin, or accused of wanting to copulate with a dog. As two dogs copulate the entire camp roars with laughter and a little girl of six cries delightedly, "They are copulating!" The children may see the boisterous open foreplay of the adults and glimpse the sexual act in the dim light of the early morning.

Yet with all of this I never saw or heard of intercourse among children. Jokes about the love affairs of children among themselves are never made by the adults nor by the children. The children receive so much satisfaction

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"Chantágn, listen to this. Chantágn, listen to this." Singing is a favorite 237
way of showing off among the Kaingáng, as among ourselves. Sometime later after Chukembégn had had a fight with his wife he complained bitterly that Kanggúin had said to her: "'if you were my wife I would not treat you that way.' Whenever anyone has a fight with his wife Kanggúin always talks that way to her. He wants a wife, but no one will live with him!"

Nanmblá has two wives. Although his wives compete for him they are [595]
not totally at a loss if they have to sleep without him. When I was at his brother-in-law's house one day while he was away, Nanmblá's wife Wainlúin was there watching with amused appreciation while Padnmbá cast a knife at a log. Nothing passed between them but their boisterous laughter, but when Padnmbá at last went away Wainlúin leaned against the housepost and gazed after him. When he had gone fifty paces down the path he turned around, flashed a smile, and disappeared down the slope. I never heard what happened between Wainlúin and Padnmbá after that, but I did hear of a quarrel that Nanmblá had with both his wives because they had relations with other men. One day I saw Vomblé caressing his son's mother-in-law. Another time Chukembégn told me that he and a few others were on the side of a hill when a little way's off they saw Padnmbá making love to Waikuklé's wife in the bushes. Soon she got up and ran off but Chukembégn and his companions called out laughingly "You don't have to run; we saw you." A complete account of all the sexual intrigues would fill a long but rather repetitious chapter.

The amorous history of every young man or woman is one of the favorite 239
themes of conversation among the young people. "First Koktá had an 521
affair with Yonggó, then with Kanggúin and then with me. Then she went around with Kanyahé but he left her and took up with Yu'á." "I went around for a while with Koktá. . . ." "Oh, no you didn't. She used to go around with Kundágn but now she's going to change to Kanyahé." They enumerate, expand, correct without end and with unflagging interest.

I never heard them discuss these affairs in front of the principals' spouses, but Amendé's presence did not prevent them from joking about her unmarried daughter's relations with Padnmbá and Ndíli. "Layongndá [her daughter] is lying with Ndíli. She has gone off with her lover Ndíli to get nuts." Amendé sat listening and laughing while she nursed her little bastard of five months.

The Kaingáng preoccupation with sex expresses itself also in the belief 231
that death is often caused by intercourse with a supernatural monster or [761]
with a ghost. Both men and women may wake up in the morning sick and bleeding or insane because they have spent the night with the supernatural, who has lured or forced them into intercourse. Unlike their neighbors in

[171] [72] Unlike their neighbors in JUNGLE PEOPLE
831 Paraná the Kaingáng have no love magic. They are, in general, a very practical and aggressive people and not given to the use of charms. They view all people but little children as spontaneously, vigorously and indiscriminately sexual, and act accordingly.

The young man who, urged at last by his desire for a woman to cook and keep house for him, and the young woman who, impelled by her wish to have someone who will constantly care for her, at last settle down with a spouse, have this background of philandering, jesting and frequently adulterous sexual experience that will color married life into old
[964] age. Kaingáng men and women are not advised by their parents to be faithful to one another. The only case I heard of is that of Amendó who was one of the wives of Wanyekí. When she and her sisters married him her mother said to her: "Live with him. If they leave him, you remain with him." And she always did.[3]

581 In our society the traditional, the ideal stabilizer of marriage is love—an
586 exclusive sex interest in one person. The Kaingáng have no tradition, no background for the development of such an interest. Marriage in other
[523] primitive societies is sometimes stabilized by a large payment for the bride, but in Kaingáng society there is no such payment. If a woman leaves her husband she can always find a relative who will take care of her. Her brother or her cousin or her sister will always take her in, and although she lacks the full security that marriage gave her she need not starve, for there are any number of men who will accept her as an added responsibility without complaint, even boasting a little that they took care of her and that she called them *yágs*.[3] Besides having this dependable bulwark to her security a woman's own aggressiveness makes it far easier for her to get another husband than for a woman in a similar position in our society. When a woman is left without a husband the liaisons which she has established surreptitiously serve her in good stead, for then one of her lovers may become her new husband.[4]

586 Chukembégn had been having some trouble with his wife, Chantígn. When he left her for a few days to go hunting he told his hunting companions that he was going to leave his wife. News got back to the post before he returned. One day Chantígn, who had previously amused herself by casual approaches to me, called me. I came out of my house and sat down where anyone who happened to be around could see us. "What do

[2] See p. 30. These people have been long dead.

[3] See Appendix II, p. 177. Such a woman can partially earn her keep by gathering fruit and wood, helping with the cooking and the children, and clearing the ground for camp sites. If she has lovers they will contribute to the family larder.

[4] Sometimes, though rarely, former husbands may become lovers, but this does not occur where the woman herself has rejected them as husbands.

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found an outlet in attacks or designs on members of the same extended family.

The Development of Waikayú

When a male is *kẽlú* he lies about caressing his hunting companions and spends his nights seeking young women. This is the period when he is childless, when he follows leaders, and when no specific judgments are made of him. But as he grows older, becomes *chõi chí*, grown old, he becomes *waikayú*. This gradual acquisition of the traditional stamp of approval is accompanied by two significant events. First, the growing man relinquishes his youthful caressing—men of forty or more rarely caress other men. Second, he acquires children of his own and need no longer satisfy himself through playing with the babies of others. After three children have been born to his wife the union is stabilized. By this time the man had taken active part in several raids on the Brazilians and might even have slaughtered some venderta enemies. He was *waikayú;* he loved himself. Now he began to boast to his children of his capacity for beer and of his prowess in killing Brazilians.

The process of actually turning away from others physically may go quite far in some individuals. Klendó said to me, "Since I did not want *to have intercourse* I told my belly to my children."[3] It is significant that the introduction to a discussion of boasting should contain a statement regarding a reduction in sex interests.

157 Sexual relations, although enjoyable, are felt as obstacles to the achieve-
231 ment of *waikayú*, and any weakness or failure in social obligations may be ridiculed in terms of preoccupation with sex. In a story Vomblé kills Kuichó's relatives, but when Kuichó asks him where they are he replies, "They have forgotten all about you because they are too much taken up with copulating in the buttock-hole."[5] They copulated so much that they forgot their father. Then Kuichó said, 'I thought so! They have been copulating so much in the buttock-hole . . . that they do not think of me.'" In similar terms Kundãgn ridicules an enemy who manages to escape him: "You showed your manliness by setting women on their heads!"[6] The Kaingáng are the only primitive people known to me who made a special point of boasting to their own children, and this, too, is significant when seen against the general background of self-interest. One's children are extensions of oneself, one lives in them, and boasting to them is almost like boasting to oneself.

[3] This refers to his drinking beer.

[5] This is a Kaingáng vulgarism. The remark is usually understood as a reference to the customary Kaingáng manner of intercourse from behind.

[6] Another vulgarism. He is describing the position assumed by dogs.